

Trade G. B. V. 19.

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L E T T E R *VE*
F R O M
A Grower of Long Combing Wool,
T O
THE MANUFACTURERS
OF THAT
VALUABLE STAPLE.



L O N D O N,

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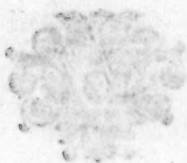
A Gower of Long Combing Wool

T O

THE MANUFACTURERS

OF THAT

VALUABLE



L O N D O N

1852

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L E T T E R
T O T H E
WOOLEN MANUFACTURERS.

I HAVE read the complaints of the Wool Growers, and your resolutions of opposing their endeavours to obtain relief in their distress. The dispute appears to me unnatural; the Wool Grower and the Woollen Manufacturer are so nearly related, that their interests cannot be naturally adverse to each other; it must be the selfish ungenerous spirit of commerce which first made the division, and to serve some private view, still wishes to foment the discord. It is inconsistent, that any thing which discourages the Wool Grower, should be necessary to the support of the Woollen Manufacture; the connection between them is so strong, that whatever is injurious to the one, cannot be beneficial to the other.

You have publicly advised the occupiers of land to keep fewer sheep; a doctrine little expected from Woollen Manufacturers; you complain of the quantity and weight of Wool, the necessary consequences of the improvement of land, and though the Wool is coarser, yet if half its value at foreign markets could be obtained, its quantity would amply compensate for the defect in its quality; the fine Wool loses the advantage of a superior quality, by the insignificance of its quantity, and is the peculiar produce of a barren soil. Do you then recommend the im-

* See Considerations upon the present State of the Wool Trade, printed for Elmsly, in the Strand, &c,

poverishing the land, and annihilating those immense sums expended in its cultivation? or do you mean to advise the nation to refuse riches because they cannot pass through your hands? It is easy to demonstrate that Wool, after paying such a duty as would amply secure you from being underworked by the foreign manufacturer, would bring home more to its grower than any other species of produce his land is able to afford him; to be compelled therefore to change the produce of his land from Wool to Corn, deprives him of so much as arises from the difference of their value. Wool has always been considered the most valuable article which this nation produces, and to keep its importance ever in memory, our wise ancestors gave it the distinguishing honour of being the seat of the Judges in the House of Lords; it is almost incredible, that you should be the first to stop this source of wealth, or turn its current into a lesser channel.

That ill deserves the title of a national benefit, which is not able to repay the loss it may occasion to any part of society. If your monopoly of Wool is of such publick utility as you pretend, the nation may well afford to compensate by some bounty the loss it occasions to the Grower; a national advantage should be purchased at the national expence; it is unreasonable that private purses should pay for publick benefits, and the occupier of land be ruined by enriching the rest of society. If the nation does not gain as much as the Grower loses by your monopoly, there must then be a balance against it, and common sense must call for its destruction, as injurious to the publick welfare. It was the assertion of Lord Burleigh, "that the fall of a shilling in the stone of Wool was the loss of a million sterling to England." If there is any truth in his opinion, and he was universally allowed to be as well secured from error as human wisdom could protect him, how many millions is your monopoly now indebted to the nation?

If the foreign manufacturer could be supplied with Wool from no other part of the world, and could be prevented from obtaining our own from smugglers, it would then be wise to prohibit the exportation of our Wool, that we might add to it the value of labour, and force the
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foreigner to pay for them both in the purchase of manufactured goods ; the manufacturer would not then advise decreasing the number of sheep ; the demand for his goods must render it unnecessary to discourage the growth of wool, and your monopoly might then be of essential benefit to the nation : but when foreigners can procure Wool from other countries, of a quality which enables them to rival your manufactures ; when the experience of a century has discovered, that we cannot prevent their obtaining our own, it is absurd to expect your monopoly to produce its intended effect, and the slow demand for Wool proves its inability to do it. To restrain therefore the exportation of that superfluous Wool, which you are not in need of, is injuring the Grower without benefiting the manufacture ; it is resolving, because one avenue to wealth is stopped, to shut up the other also ; and to decrease the produce of Wool, because the manufacture cannot consume it, is communicating the weakness and distemper of the manufacture to the land, and converting what was meant for a support into a burthen. Your manufacture, one should imagine, was intended to promote the sale and increase the value of the produce of land ; it surely never could be instituted to diminish the price, or discourage the growth of Wool ; yet you appear to have so far forgot the original intent of your institution, that instead of contributing to the welfare of the landed property, you seem to claim a right to be maintained at its expence.

When you talk of the loss the nation would sustain by the destruction of your manufacture, and the depopulation of the country ; you must mean only to turn the attention from the point in dispute ; you cannot suppose that it is either the interest or inclination of the gentlemen of landed property to injure your manufacture. The question is, whether the absolute prohibition to export Wool, so injurious to its grower, is not unnecessary to the support of your manufacture ? it was thought so, and the exportation permitted in the wise reign of Elizabeth ; yet so far from destroying your manufacture, or banishing your workmen, the Flemmings rival manufacturers being ruined, their workmen came over to England. You
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wish to make the nation believe, that your monopoly of Wool is absolutely necessary to the existence of the manufacture; but unfortunately for you, your manufacture itself furnishes ample proof to the contrary; it flourished for a long period under the protection of a duty upon the exportation of Wool. The duty secures you an advantage over the foreign manufacturer.

You have been accused of being the smugglers yourselves; I am unwilling to join in any accusation, the truth of which I cannot positively prove, yet there is something so wonderfully suspicious in your conduct, so little like that of faithful guardians of the interests of the manufacture, that to any one accustomed to the investigation of truth by circumstances, it amounts nearly to conviction.

If you have any men of candour amongst you, who can divest themselves of their prejudices, turn their eyes from their interest, and dare to look upon truth, it is to them I mean to address myself; they cannot deny that your monopoly falls short of its intended effect on the foreign manufacturer, and that it has directly opposite to its intention, a destructive effect on the landed interest of this kingdom. These are facts too evident for you to controvert; I will now call your attention to an enquiry, whether it answers its other intent of benefiting your manufacture, for if it fails in that also, it will be difficult for you to discover a single recommendation to support it against a load of objections.

The home consumption of your goods, when your countrymen can afford to purchase them, is computed to be three times as great as your exportation; is it not then inconsistent with policy to decrease the former by your monopoly, when an exportation with a duty, free from that injurious consequence, would as effectually contribute to extend the latter?

The manufacturer who can purchase his materials upon his own terms, need not give himself much trouble in the working it, since he does not depend upon the will of another, but can allow himself what profit he pleases; the monopoly opens an easy road to wealth, and indolence puts a stop to improvement.

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To what an incredible height, has invention been stretched in support of the Cotton Manufacture; its workmen, spurred on by the necessity of surpassing other manufactures, have raised it to a pitch of superiority, highly prejudicial to yours. They saw with surprise your late attempt at improvement in painted stuffs; they were alarmed at your first symptoms of invention, and endeavoured to stop your progress by a duty. The short period of the existence of their manufacture, compared to that of yours, makes it the child of yesterday; ought you not then to blush at being indebted to the invention of its workmen, for a machine to spin your Wool?

Your monopoly enables the manufacturer to flourish, whilst the manufacture decays, it supports him independent of the merit of his goods, and he finds industry unnecessary to enrich him. In the cotton manufacture riches have been the distinguishing reward of invention and improvement; it has no monopoly, to fill the purse of indolence, to check the spirit of emulation, and to draw the attention of its workmen, from excelling rival manufactures, to plundering the defenceless property of their countrymen.

In the days of affluence and prosperity, the supineness of the landed gentlemen, made it easy for the watchful spirit of commerce, to encroach on their privileges, and obtain advantages injurious to their property. Their wealth made them negligent of their interest, their ignorance of commercial matters, easy to be imposed upon, and their generosity freed them from suspicion. Encouraged by their inattention, you have dared publicly to acknowledge, that the price of Wool is settled amongst yourselves, you have even reminded those who refused to accept your terms, that is in your power to deprive them of any sale for their commodity, and it is not difficult to produce instances, where you have carried your threats into execution.

Strange it is, that these acts of insolence and oppression, did not rouse the spirit of the landed gentlemen, and fill them with indignation; but such has been their infatuation, such their servile submission to prejudice and custom,
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that you might still have continued to rob and insult them with impunity, if the public expences had not reduced them to a degree of poverey, incapable of bearing your extortions.

Your avarice now begins to interfere with the support of the state, you not only stop the current of the landlord's rent, but that of the publick revenue, and lay your rapacious hands on that property, which the nation itself stands in need of.

If you reflect on the arbitrary manner in which you have exercised it, you may I think esteem yourselves fortunate in so long and uninterrupted enjoyment of your power; necessity now raises her invincible arm, to put a period to your dominion, and free the landed interest from your insulting tyranny and oppression.



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